

April 1998 Pileup

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Presidential Ponderings

The Charlotte Hamfest is past and I trust everyone found some "gems" to take home. And, I'm sure you had many eyeball QSOs with friends. I'm told our Saturday evening gathering was also fun. I was unavoidably detained by my employer that evening. The general consensus is we need a different activity next year due to the rising cost of this event at Valentino's. So, please, share your ideas with the officers for what you'd like to have happen, and what you'd like to do.

H40AA and H40AB recently brought DXers a new country, Temotu Island. I hope each of you got in their log.

Some challenging technological hurdles (for me) have been topped, and very soon you will see the results of these efforts. The Young Mountain Digipeater has been down for some time, and is now up with only 441.000 MHz @ 1200 baud available. Soon, we'll have both 1200 and 9600 baud available on 441.000MHz from Young Mountain at our new tower site. We should thank K0SD and our friends at Dial-Page for the time we shared their facilities. We will also have 144.950 MHz @1200 baud back on the air and another 440 MHz backbone link to W4DXA working just as soon as N5BI gets the key.

It's been slow progress on the MITREK radios-due to all my time being devoted to the Young Mountain installation. I hope to see more progress in the next couple of weeks.

An antenna party was recently held at the repeater site (K4MQG's QTH) to try fixing the repeater "illness" that's been so apparent lately. N0EKB, WA4UUP, KO4GU, K4MQG and yours truly removed the DB Products dipole array, and replaced it with a Stationmaster antenna, while looking for a fix to the DB antenna. We found all the weird sounds and deafness of the repeater was indeed being caused by the antenna. It's now being replaced by the manufacturer. If you've ever had a doubt about soldering the braid of a coaxial connector, talk to Gary. He can quote you chapter and verse from the manufacturer on the pitfalls of water in UHF connectors, even as little as one drop. Thanks to all who helped, and to Gary for providing a very enjoyable meal afterward.

As we begin to climb our antenna supports once again during this great Carolina weather, I wish to say: "Be careful! Take your time and let safety ALWAYS be your watchword."

Vy 73 Joe K4MD

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Editorial

Generosity is our theme this month. Hams are often generous, and within the past few months, I've experienced several noteworthy examples. K4SFI donated his old TH-6; K4BVQ gave me some Rohn SSV sections (I hope to erect them as a full size 160M vertical supporting an 80M four-square); WD4BTF surprised me with a small UPS care package of items I needed (we'd talked at the Hamfest); KI4TZ has donated some items; K2SD recently helped recover some corrupted CT files; N4ZC has, of course, helped with tower and antenna work. The list goes on.

What's important to consider about all this is the "no questions asked" aspect of each instance. Granted, I've done a lot of tower and antenna work for CDXA club members throughout my time here in Charlotte. And maybe I could consider this my "due," but I think it's more likely simple generosity. Hams (at least the good ones, meaning those who are active in lots of ways) seem to genuinely enjoy sharing-knowledge as well as material resources. It's how things get done. It's what we call tradition. It means a lot.

What it means is part of the very essence of our hobby. It's part of the romance, that lure of the unexpected (Who's going to come back to my CQ?) which excites us all (I hope it still works this way for each of you!). I was, in each instance, pleased and surprised by these gifts. And took them as such-as gifts. Gifts have a power, and I felt it each and every time. As I use these items in daily hamming, this thought will recur again and again, and I know I'll feel rewarded-lucky to know such friends, acquaintances, and fellow hams. Thanks again!

And now for something completely different, to twist the old Python phrase to our own end... a bit of soapbox, or mild rhetoric, again, in the form of, well, maybe a complaint, or at least a diatribe. A plea, if you will, for aid, for help, for assistance and a bit of that generosity described above. The CDXA is a club. By definition, we're supposed to have a common purpose. Regardless of how we describe it, we should unite around it. Simply put, we **MUST HAVE** more than two people (K4MD & N4ZC) involved with PacketCluster. (And I mean more than users, obviously.) The old N4ZC node (re-installed at K4ZA as W4DXA) continues to malfunction. We continue to be unable to resolve the problems. It's now silent-off the air. There have been some complaints. Grumbings about dues, etcetera. Again, the issue is simple: **HELP**, rather than **COMPLAIN**; **RESPOND**, rather than **REACT**. We can use help in a variety of ways. And some members have stepped forward. Some members have responded. But we need more help. It's going to require pooling our resources-both manpower as well as our limited funds, and carefully budgeting each, to resolve these issues. So, call K4MD or K4ZA now, while you're thinking about it, and help the CDXA. By helping our club, you'll be helping yourself. It's the generous thing to do.

[Email K4ZA](#)

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Some Thoughts On 160M

I first became interested in 160 operating from Colorado as W0ZV. My station there was an elevated ground plane for transmit and eight Beverages for receiving. From late October, 1984, until I left in April of 1993, I worked 238 countries, 38 zones, winning the CQ 160 CW Contest several times for Zone 4.

I first operated from NC in my new home in Franklinton (30 miles north of Raleigh) in September, 1993. The first year I used a 50 foot inverted-L and a couple of Beverages. By the summer of 1994, I'd put up my 150 foot tower and suspended a full size Delta Loop from it. The loop was a big improvement over the inverted-L, and I was able to win the ARRL DX Contest in the spring of 1995. I moved to my present location in New London in June of 1995, putting up a 180 foot tower that August. At first, I just suspended the same Delta Loop from it, but decided to shunt feed the tower in December of 1996. I wanted to improve my signal NW/SE (since the loop was broadside NE/SW). After several tests comparing the tower and Delta Loop, I concluded the tower was working better in all directions, so I took down the loop early in 1997. My first serious effort in the CQ 160 CW Contest was this year. It appears I'm in a dead heat for the top USA score with the W3LPL contest station. Since Frank has a much better station (including a phased four-vertical array), I'm very pleased! The real secret to success on 160 is receiving antennas, of course. I'm now using seven Beverages, ranging from 600 to over 1000 feet long. I'm very pleased with this newest QTH, the quietest location I've ever had. Currently, I have 293 countries and 39 zones on 160; I'm hoping to reach 300 countries within a few years.

Comparing conditions between CO and NC means probably what you'd expect--conditions from CO to the Pacific and Far East were great and conditions to Europe were a real challenge. From NC, Europe sounds about like Japan did from CO, but perhaps even stronger since we're closer to Europe than CO is to Japan. I believe atmospheric noise was worse from CO, considering the tornado belt in OK and TX was always generating QRN, except in the coldest weather. From here, my Beverage toward Europe rejects this noise, whereas it could not from CO (since OK/TX were just slightly to the side of the path to Europe). A very pleasant surprise from NC has been long path propagation to Central/Southeast Asia just after our sunset in the winter. This has allowed several exciting contacts with S21XX, VK9XY, 9M2AX, and 9V1XQ. These signals actually come long path over South America, a very long haul indeed on Topband! All in all, I prefer my NC location, because it doesn't have as much atmospheric noise. And, I have less manmade noise. I was plagued with electric fence noise in CO. I'd guess there must have been 100 fences within a few miles of that location; I was continually having problems. I really do enjoy the better propagation to Europe, since I have many friends there, many of whom I've visited. Although I never operated Topband in my early days as KN4RID/K4RID here in the 50s, it's always nice to come home, and I have no regrets about the move.

-W4ZV

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END OF AN ERA

The title's not overly dramatic, considering the consequences. Recently, a number of antennas and towers came down out at the N4ZC QTH. Roger has gotten out of the multi-mode contest business, if you will. That's the end of what I'm choosing to call an era, which began, for me, in 1984, when I moved to this area.

I learned a lot there-from how to find the place in the dark (even being talked in on 2M, I got lost), to learning where the phone band was on 15M (it's one of Rog's favorite Sparky stories). I learned a lot about myself-operating there-in various DX and domestic contests. I also learned a lot about other folks, who I operated with, in some of those same DX contests. There are some great stories, some great moments, and memories. Trips up towers, at night, in the rain. Rebuilding SB-220s over and over. Great rates, and incredibly slow times at the sunspot low. Winning the 10M contest. Working all zones in CQWW on 20, chasing the ops at W3LPL and N2RM (having run 20M at W3LPL, it was great comparing the process). The inevitable sweep in SS. Pre-contest strategies; post-contest analyses. Computer glitches. Countless hours on those same towers, building or repairing antennas and rotators. Flying our own little blimps. Problem-solving on our limited budget. Joyce asking us (every day), "Are you having fun?" Let me say, Rog, that no matter how hot and sweaty, how frustrated or tired, how angry or annoyed, the answer is "Yes," I always did have fun at the ZC station.

It's a change designed to relieve stress and pressure-something Roger needs a bit less of, and for healthful reasons, we all hope it works. It means those towers and antennas will move a few miles down the road here in Stanley, to my own QTH. I hope it means I'll finally be able to single op in contests I'm looking forward to that-to learning lots of new things. I'm looking forward to the change, just as much as I'm regretting what it represents. We'll have to change the CDXA homepage, since we'll no longer be the "premiere multi-mode contest station" in North Carolina. It means I'll see less of certain operators. It means something will change within the club, in contest terms (it's always been a butt-your-head-against-the-wall kind of love affair anyhow...). It means a lot of things. Mostly, it means the end of an era. I hope it signals the beginning of another....

DX NEWS

In case you missed hearing, the recent "new country" activated by H40AA and H40AB surprised and excited lots of DXers. The H40AA crew consisted of operators from four continents: H44GP, H44GR, JA5DQH, N4GN, N7NG, OH0XX, OH1RY, OH2BC, OH2BE, OH2BH, OH2TA, W6OSP, and 9V1YC.

QSLs will be handled by OH2BN:

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